845 Wrong positions, especially breech presentations, may result from several causes. The mother may have moved around too much and worked too hard, hit a dog with her foot, put the "foot" of a stick of wood in the fire first, failed to remove the *comal* from the fire immediately after finishing the cooking of tortillas, eaten toasted tortillas, or eaten off the metate (the latter taboo was explained on the basis that the metate has only three legs). Children are born blind only because "God wills it."

Witches may interfere with pregnancy and make the child arrive dead. The preventive [789] remedy is to cook tomato peeling and a potsherd of Guadalajara ware together and drink the liquid.

843 Fathers are also under some restrictions during the period of pregnancy. Whenever a load of wood is brought to the house it must be untied immediately or the child may be strangled by the umbilical cord. Also, the father must not kill lizards or snakes during the pregnancy, or touch resin or turpentine, or they will enter into the child. Some say the father should not kill any kind of an animal, from a snail to an ox. If he does so, the animal will enter into the child through the mouth or nose and the child will be born dead. One midwife thought the father should not have relations with his wife after the third or fourth month of pregnancy for reasons of cleanliness, but some say difficult birth or wrong positions may result from continued intercourse. The father should not work on the day of birth.

844 No distinction is made between first and subsequent births. Midwives varied in their ideas as to the frequency of births. Some believed [842] that women had children from 1 to 1½ years apart, others said from 8 months to 3 years. One midwife explained that the number of children and the frequency of births were determined by something resembling links in the uterus. These could be counted by the midwife, who could tell how many children the woman would have and, by the spacing, what the interval between births would be. Some women might be capable of as many as 25 pregnancies.

All births are attended by midwives, who form a professional group, although without

844 organization. It is believed all the midwives in Cherán were interviewed by the staff. Most of them are elderly women past childbearing age. Some 4 or 5 years before the study, all of the midwives apparently had received instruction from a doctor called in by the priest. This is reflected to some extent in the methods used, particularly in some efforts at asepsis and the use of antiseptics. The following biographical data were secured from the midwives, the individuals being referred to by number.

No. 1. About 55 years of age; 4 years' experience. Formerly was a curer. No one in her family had been a midwife; she entered the profession "by accident" and "knew how" by the grace of the Holy Virgin.

No. 2. Age unknown, but has had 20 years' experience. Her mother was a midwife and urged her to become one also. She became a midwife because her small business was not enough to keep her alive. She had been married and had one daughter in 6 years of marriage, apparently taking up midwifery after loss of her husband.

No. 3. About 55 years of age, 4 years' experience. Learned by observing a grandmother who was a midwife. Other "grandparents" also tried to teach her. She believes, in addition, she possesses a special "virtue" for such work. Before becoming a midwife she was a curer, devoting herself especially to women who suffered abdominal pains from overwork, using massage. She still does curing, but since her husband died, 5 years before, has been a midwife. She likes the work. She says the Virgin of Monserrato is the patroness of the midwives.

No. 4. New to the profession. Has attended only two births; one of the patients accused her at the court of causing swelling of the organs because of inexperience and refused to pay her fee.

No. 5. Has been midwife 5 years. No further data.

No. 6. Has been a midwife 30 years. Was assistant to another midwife for a long time. One day a child was being born dead; the subject took cotton and put a medicine she knew on the head of the mother and the child was born successfully. There was a quarrel, but finally the midwife, who was very old, began to teach

[845]

[578]

844 Sometimes, when the pains first start, the patient is laid on a blanket which is then lifted by four persons, one at each corner. The mother is then turned around gently for 15 or 20 minutes. This is believed to hasten the birth and aid the child to get into the proper position. The midwife may also walk from one side to another, saying, "I am coming," to hurry the child.

Most midwives specify certain materials which should be provided by the family in advance. These things include scissors, cooking oil, lard, cotton, and silk thread. Parents provide clothing for the child; the midwife does not specify anything for the infant.

844 278 Some midwives, when the birth pains begin, give the mother *gobernadorcillo* or possibly other plants to accelerate the birth. In any case it is asserted that the same herbs believed to cause abortion are administered at this time, usually with sugar or brown sugar. One herb (unidentified) is called zihuapaxtle, a Nahua name. There is no use of wheat rust, however.

844 When the crown of the head of the child is visible, the midwife tries to hurry through the rest of the birth so that there will be less danger of the child being born dead.

It is said that many normal births take only about 15 minutes. This can hardly be counted from the time the first labor pains are felt but is possibly from the time the labor becomes intense. Many mothers in Cherán, however,

● 845 seem to have fairly difficult births. Cases of labor lasting as much as 6 or 7 hours are reported.

In case the labor is difficult and prolonged, remedies of various sorts are used. The helpers apply pressure to the abdomen. One midwife boils a bezoar, the calcareous secretion from the intestines of some ruminant, brought from the hot country, and has the patient drink the water. Another gives the mother hot chocolate made with water and sugar, and massages the abdomen. Another covers the patient with a blanket and has her breathe the fumes from sugar or some sweet thing burned in a brazier. One midwife stated that when the patient is very "dry," that is, there is no discharge of blood and no breaking of the amniotic membrane, a bit of *nopal* (prickly pear) leaf is roasted in

845 the fire, opened and rubbed with oil, and placed on the abdomen and coccyx of the patient.

Some midwives say the influence of the phases
821 of the moon determines the length of labor.
844 Eclipses also affect the labors. Witchcraft or improper care by the mother may be a cause of prolonged labor. If much silky white liquid is discharged in a difficult birth, it is said the mother did not bathe herself and keep clean or that she had relations with her husband after she should have ceased.

845 Breech presentations and other abnormal positions are known, although one midwife had not seen one in 5 years of practice. When they occur the midwife must be adept at manipulating the child. She puts lard on her hands and works the legs out first. The arms of the foetus must be kept at its sides and the chin down to prevent strangulation. According to one account of a breech presentation, several midwives were called in and an attempt was made to get the doctor from Paracho. One midwife (by her own account, at least) used a wooden bowl to distend the cervix, reached in and turned the child and delivered it successfully before the doctor arrived. In difficult births the child is sometimes born dead. The midwife touches his belly to see if he is still breathing; if he is, she lights a cigarette and puffs the smoke in his face "to wake him up."

Twins are relatively rare, but are known to a number of midwives, who do not report special trouble with them. One remarked that they came "like two cherries on branching
[144] stems." The Mongoloid spot is described as occurring occasionally.

Numerous abnormalities in birth are reported. Some are undoubtedly due to venereal
[753] diseases, about which the Cherán people know very little. Even our most sophisticated informant was a little dubious of just what gonorrhea and syphilis were. Some abnormalities, almost ceretainly due to syphilis, are attributed to the father having worked in turpentine. One midwife reported a case where the father persisted in working in turpentine, which foams when being boiled. When the child started to arrive, the mother nearly suffocated. All she could smell was turpentine. The child's arm emerged first; it was black and when the midwife touched it the skin broke and the

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845 inside was foam like the boiling turpentine. By giving the mother medicines the delivery succeeded, but the child's skin broke easily and inside was foam. The more bizarre aspects of this account may be discounted, but some factual basis probably existed.

Another case reported was a child born with the "head all hollow." Yet another had eyes "as though gouged out with a knife" and only the rudiments of a nose. Both children were [821] born dead. The phenomena were attributed to an eclipse. Few cases occur in which the mother has died without delivery being accomplished, but still-births are more frequent. Strangling with the cord is said to occur in some cases. Birth of children with clubfoot (said to be caused by the mother not taking care of herself) and blind children (caused by God's will) are both known. No hunchbacks were reported. One other case where the child's arm emerged first was reported; the child died but the mother lived. Animal births are mentioned also. Only one case accompanied by severe hemorrhage was reported.

[805] Children born in May are said to be mischievous and courageous, those born in February to be half crazy.

846 After the birth of the child the mother stays in bed from 8 to 15 days. At the conclusion of this time she bathes and gets up, but remains under food taboos and spends some time reclining during the next 5 days, when she bathes again and may go out of the house. The midwife visits the mother daily until she gets out of bed, massaging her. When the mother can walk, she begins to do small tasks. Full resumption of tasks is not undertaken until the termination of the food restrictions, about 40 days after birth. Some women do not go out of the house until 3 weeks have passed. After the mother has gotten out of bed, the midwife [278] may still massage her with unguents, either coconut oil or white lily. During the period the mother should not be left alone, so she will not be frightened or visited by an evil spirit. Usually the mother is cared for after birth by the husband's mother, by her own mother, or some female relative. Wealthier families, though, may hire someone to assist.

846 757 One case of what was probably a postparturient infection was recorded. The midwife